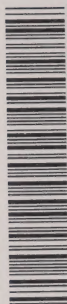


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# Public Libraries in Ontario









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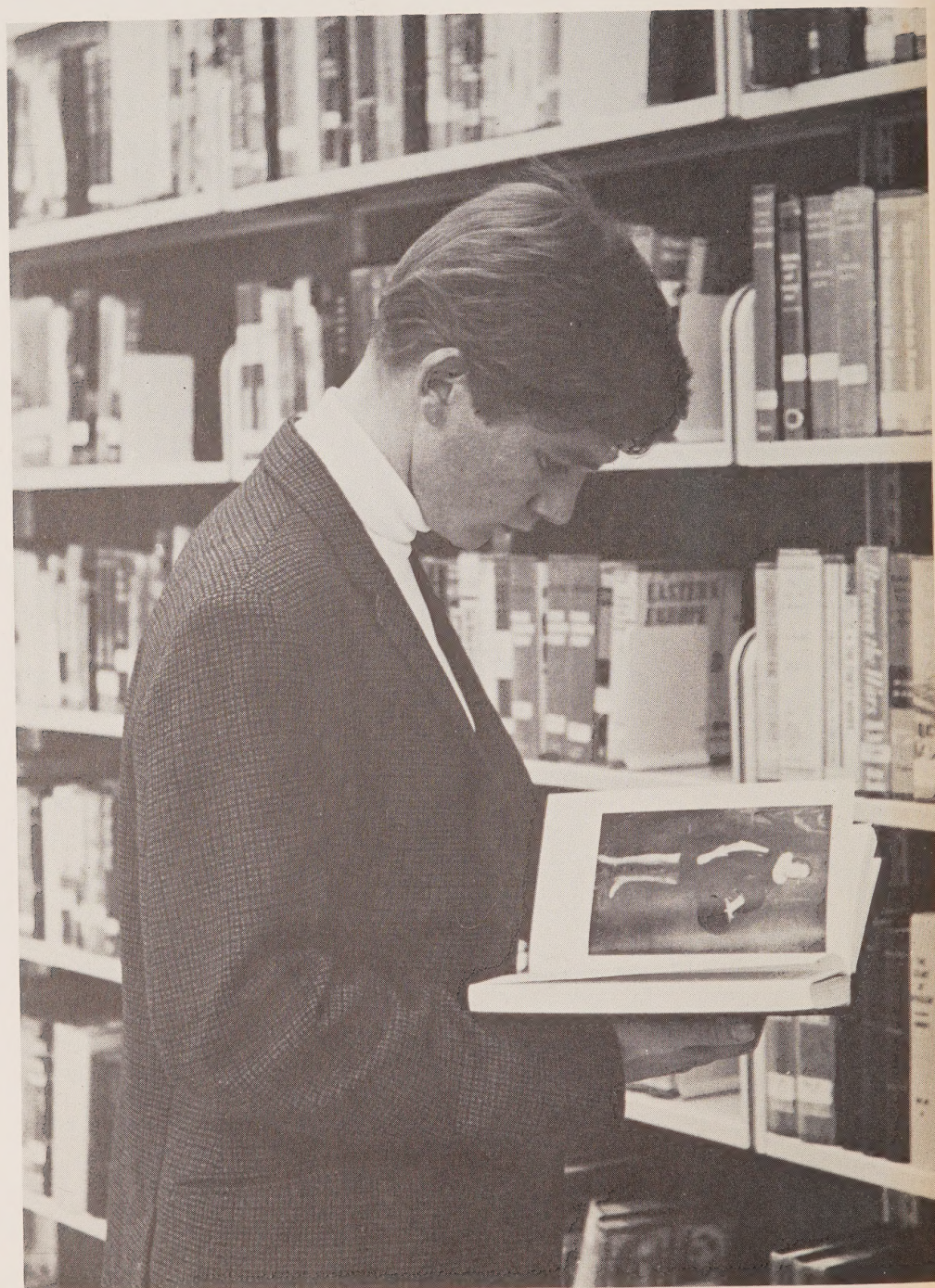


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# Contents

A brief history	1
The municipal public library	1
The county public library	2
The regional library system, and the Ontario Provincial Library Council	2
The Public Libraries Act, and Regulation	4
The library board	5
The professional librarian	6
The library technician	8
School, university, college, and special libraries	9
Library associations	11
The Department of Education	11
The responsibilities of the public library	12
Provincial Library Service directory	12

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Libraries go back in time as far as the written word, and libraries in schools and universities have been known for many centuries. But the library as an aspect of further education and community service has its beginning in the nineteenth century.

In Ontario, early records show informal library associations in the first years of the past century, and Egerton Ryerson's school and public library program at mid-century. The first library legislation in Ontario was the "Library Association and Mechanics Institute Act" passed by the Legislature of Upper Canada in 1851. The "Free Libraries Act" was passed in 1882. The Report of the Minister of Education for 1900 shows 118 public and 253 association libraries operating, with Toronto reporting a collection of more than 100,000 volumes, and Brantford, Guelph, Hamilton and London with between 10,000 to 30,000 volumes.

The development of public libraries was quite rapid during the first quarter of the 20th century, and again in the years after the Second World War.

Many public libraries in Ontario are operated under municipal by-laws. The largest public libraries, in size of buildings and extent of service, are in our cities. Some of these libraries, such as the Toronto Public Library and the London Public Library, were well established in the nineteenth century and have gained a considerable reputation for library service. A large part of the total of public library expenditure, circulation of books, and other services, is made by approximately fifty public libraries in cities and other larger municipalities in Ontario.

The municipal public library is an aspect of local government, and the library board is a local board under the Municipal Act. But the public library board is also a body corporate, separate from the municipal corporation. The autonomy of the municipal public library in its development has brought to Ontario in this day a strong tradition of independence, and flexibility in responding to the community.

The municipal public library consists of the main library, and, in larger cities, of one or more branches. In some cases, additional service is given by means of bookmobiles. The advantage of the bookmobile is that it can service several points in a large suburban area. The bookmobile may include schools among its stops, but a bookmobile is not a substitute for school libraries.

Some larger municipal public libraries are recognized as "resource libraries." This means that they function as important centers for reference and other service within the regional systems and the Ontario structure of public library service.

The county in Ontario is referred to as the "second tier" of government. The first tier is the provincial government, the second tier is the county, and the third tier is the municipality. A county public library is established when a county council passes a county library by-law and appoints a library board. The county library board then organizes library service for the county. Except that it serves several municipalities, and serves a large area of rural and urban population, the county library is not unlike a larger municipal public library. It operates through branch libraries and bookmobiles.

The county in Ontario is in most cases comparable to a small city, with a population of about 50,000. There are, of course, exceptions, and some counties have populations of more than 100,000 or less than 20,000. The cities in Ontario remain outside county government and therefore operate their own library boards and other municipal services. Studies are underway to explore the way in which cities and other municipalities might come together under a regional form of government. This does not present a major problem in library development, however, for the county libraries and city libraries are represented on the boards of the regional library systems, and co-operation is obtained in this way.

The county librarian and county library boards face special problems in administering county library service. Because of the scattered population, the county library board usually works closely with local library committees in the towns and villages. Bookmobile service to schools has been an important aspect of county library service in the past because so many of the rural schools have been small and have been without libraries, but this situation is changing. In the more rural counties, it is important to establish special collections for agriculture, book service by mail, and workshops and other methods of training local librarians. For these and other reasons, county librarianship remains one of the most diversified and challenging of occupations.

A regional library system is a group of libraries working together. Each of the 14 systems serves a population of at least 100,000 in two or more counties or districts, and no community is excluded from a region. The boundaries are similar to those of the economic regions. A regional system is not an amalgamation of municipalities or municipal library boards, but the library board is made up largely of representatives of municipal and county libraries. The regional board is not responsible to municipal councils, except in Metropolitan Toronto where special legislation provides that the board shall be the library board for the corporation of Metropolitan Toronto.

The regions differ in size, population, strength of library resources, and library expenditure. For this and other reasons we find that the regional policies vary. Five regional boards each operate one or more bookmobiles, whereas other regional boards leave this direct service to county library boards. Some boards have named a regional reference and resource centre, whereas other boards find that their regions have no "natural" centre and prefer to strengthen the reference service in several public libraries. Some boards have established a headquarters in the largest public library, whereas other boards prefer a separate headquarters.

Regional boards have established one or more of the following policies:

- Plan and strengthen reference service and establish a regional resource centre;
- Develop inter-library loan for books, films, and special materials, and introduce co-operative plans for the retention and use of periodicals, etc.;
- Establish a Telex and telephone communications network;
- Establish a regional circulation system and borrower's card;



- Co-operate with school, college and university libraries, and adult education agencies to develop co-ordinated service;
- Establish an advisory service to assist in library development and improved methods;
- Publish a regional newsletter;
- Sponsor conferences and courses;
- Introduce co-operative book selection;
- Arrange for a central deposit of little-used books;
- Establish central cataloguing and processing;
- Establish bookmobile service;
- Administer central or branch libraries.

In most cases, these services are organized through contracts and agreements with municipal and county library boards. Funds for the services come from provincial grants, fees paid by library boards, and in some cases from monies raised by municipal councils.

While it is not an easy task for a regional library board and director to develop policies with the priority required in the region, it is clear that the purpose of the regional system is fully recognized. The emphasis today on further education, and the need for a *system* of information retrieval using efficient methods and technology, make the isolated public library an anachronism. The regional library boards have recognized the need and are creating the structure for the required system. It is a democratic development, however, and involves all of the library personnel and authorities in co-operative effort.

The board of each regional library system appoints a member to the Ontario Provincial Library Council. With other members appointed by the Minister of Education, the Council of 23 members considers a wide range of library problems, receives annually a development plan from each regional system, and makes recommendations to the Minister.

The Ontario Provincial Library Council, and the regional boards, pay particular attention to the communities unserved by adequate public library service. The regional library boards in northern Ontario have been concerned with this problem for many years, and have operated bookmobile service to remote communities and Indian Reserves. The regional library boards in southern Ontario, where county government is established, have supported the development of county public libraries.

The Public Libraries Act requires that each library board shall "endeavour to provide in co-operation with other boards a comprehensive and efficient library service." The regional library systems, together with financial and other support from the Province, provide the means to this end.

# The Public Libraries Act and Regulation

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The Public Libraries Act is the legal authority for establishment and operation of public library service in Ontario. It can be amended only by the Provincial Legislature. The Act consists of four parts, as follows:

Part I provides for the powers and responsibilities of library boards in municipalities, including union libraries of two or more municipalities. Provision is made for the appointment of a five-member board in municipalities with a population under 10,000, a nine-member board for municipalities with a population of 10,000 or more, and a board appointed by agreement among two or more municipalities for a union public library board. Some of the sections of Part I apply *mutatis mutandis* to regional and county library boards.

Part II provides for the Ontario Provincial Library Council, which is made up of members appointed from each of 14 regional boards, and nine members appointed by the Minister of Education.

Part III provides for the establishment of regional library systems in Ontario, with library boards of nine members.

Part IV provides for county libraries.

The Public Libraries Act does not limit a library board in its selection of materials (books, films and microfilms, periodicals, etc.) or in establishment of space priorities for reading rooms, stacks, art galleries, museums, and other rooms and areas. The Public Libraries Act provides that any library board may make agreements or contracts with other library boards, school boards, educational groups, or individuals for mutual advantage. A board may appoint committees, such as a museum committee, and include board members and others if it is required.

A Regulation made under the Public Libraries Act has the force of law, but may be amended by order-in-council. The Regulation in 1967 provides

for three types of certificates of librarianship, two types of certificates of library service, grants for public library boards based on the number of certificates held, grants for municipal and county libraries based on expenditure and on the provincially equalized assessment per capita of the municipality or municipalities, and special grants for county and regional libraries based upon the size of the region and other factors.



The library board is a corporation consisting of members appointed by the municipal council and other bodies. The mayor in a city, or the warden in a county, is a member *ex officio*, although the council may by by-law name a substitute, under the Municipal Act. The powers and responsibilities of the library board are set forth in the Public Libraries Act. As a corporation, the board has the power to own property, and manage the affairs of the library. It does not have tax-raising power, but submits a budget each year to the municipal council or councils, or in the case of a county, to the county council.

The public library board is the community's representative, and as such its most important responsibility is to act for the community and to assist in the development of good library service. Two of its most important functions are the appointment of a chief librarian, and presenting to the municipal council and the community the importance of and services of the public library, and the necessity for funds to make possible its operation and development.

Although it may not be a continuing responsibility, the question of adequate buildings and quarters may be important because of the cost involved, the proposed location, and the necessity to plan with the municipal council and community organizations. Many library boards have faced the need for a new central library building. The board has usually appointed a building committee with the responsibility of recommending a site, recommending a method of financing including the availability of provincial grants, and recommending an architect and obtaining preliminary sketches of the proposed building. The committee has in some cases worked closely with a municipal and or community committee. An example of the successful larger committee has been the Centennial Committees which, in more than 40 Ontario municipalities, recommended that library buildings or enlargements of buildings be constructed.

The building committee has in some cases recommended the employment of a consultant, or recommended that the board of the regional library system be asked to supply a consultant, to work with the library board, the library staff, and the architect in the planning of the building.

The public library board is a most important aspect in library development, and mistakes in appointments, or failure to assume the required responsibilities, may have a grave effect upon the adequacy of library service.

Although books and pamphlets on the role and responsibilities of library trustees are available, many of the questions and terms in Ontario pertain to our own legislation, such as the following: *Annual Financial Report*

Forms for the AFR are sent from the Department early each year, to be completed by the auditor with information supplied by the secretary-treasurer of the library board, and returned to the Department to be used for grant calculation and statistics.

### *Assessment*

Assessment is the value of the property on which taxes are levied for library and other purposes. The "equalizing factor" is a provincial factor obtained through the evaluation of local assessment procedures. A municipality with a low equalized assessment per capita will obtain a small sum per capita with a specific levy but will be assisted by a higher rate of provincial grant; for a municipality with a high equalized assessment per capita the provincial grant will be much lower.

### *Capital Expenditure*

That portion of expenditure which is for land, buildings, bookmobiles, equipment, and, when a new library is built, for books. Funds for capital expenditure, for municipal and county libraries,

are obtained from (1) reserve funds, (2) sale of debentures by council on behalf of the board, (3) loans from council, (4) other sources including bequests. Capital expenditure is approved for legislative grant subject to the Regulation.

### *Carnegie Libraries*

Many of the 100 library buildings constructed in Ontario with funds given by the late Andrew Carnegie are still in use but are owned by library boards or municipal councils and may be renovated or disposed of by these agencies.

### *Grants*

Provincial or legislative grants are authorized by the Legislature each year by passing of a specific vote, and are paid out according to the Regulation under the Public Libraries Act.

### *Librarians*

The Public Libraries Act requires that the Chief Librarian be "the chief executive of the board" and as such is responsible for library management under the policies of the board including book selection, staff responsibilities, and planning.

### *Public Library*

Although this is a general term which may be used to denote any library established under the Public Libraries Act, it is also used to indicate a municipal library.

### *Statistics*

Statistics of public library service in Ontario, for the previous year, are published annually in the *Ontario Library Review* in December and are also available in pamphlet form. They are of importance for purposes of comparison, and also indicate the total public library resources in the province.

Without the professional librarian, the public library could not function. It is of course true that early libraries were without professionally trained librarians. In the middle of the nineteenth century, the affairs of the public library were managed by the members of the library board, and the librarian was in many cases a clerk who had a knowledge of the books in the library and knew the reading interests of the patrons. Today, the library board delegates the management of the library to the chief librarian, and the chief librarian in turn delegates specific responsibilities to department heads and other librarians on the staff. A librarian, therefore, must have a body of professional knowledge and professional integrity.

Most of the librarians in the public libraries of Ontario are graduates of an accredited library school at a university and hold degrees in arts and library science. Librarians may also hold master of arts, master of library science and in some cases doctorate degrees. There are librarians who hold degrees and qualifications that are different from or are not fully equivalent to the B.A. and B.L.S. degrees. This does not mean that they may not fulfil a professional function, although it may mean some difference in the type of certificate awarded and the salary paid to the person concerned.

The field of librarianship is rich in books, professional journals, reports, surveys, films, and other sources of information. A study of these will reveal that although there is a basic professional core of knowledge, the professional librarian in *public* library work faces certain responsibilities and problems not found elsewhere. He works not with the members of one institution but with the general public, and a public of all ages and interests. Although he may specialize, the public librarian may be involved in a wide range of services besides the provision of books. Such terms as "information retrieval," "audio-visual," "further education," "community development," "art galleries and museums," indicate the range of responsibilities for the professional librarian in the public library.





Three of the most important responsibilities are the selection of books and other materials, the organization of technical services, and administration. The importance of the first two will be clear, although certainly not simple. The third is a continuing challenge. Administration and management require the making of decisions that will affect staff and patrons. Management should not mean reliance on authority, formal routines, and manipulative techniques, but rather the definition of responsibilities within the social context of work-together for a worthwhile goal. Such definition is impossible without intelligence, understanding, and easy communication.

In management, the chief librarian has the most difficult role. Management is a function delegated to the chief librarian, and yet the chief librarian must remain responsible to the library board at all times. This requires a frank discussion of policy and proposed changes at library board meetings. In a large library system, the chief librarian may delegate many of his responsibilities, including office management, the preparation of budget reviews and the annual financial report, book selection, and circulation procedures. Delegation of responsibilities does not mean that these responsibilities can be forgotten. Responsibility, communication, and development, are all a part of a two-way flow without which the public library, like any other institution, can become a bureaucracy in which people work because they have to and service to the public is impaired.

The library technician is a person with formal qualifications below the level of the professional librarian, but above those of clerical and maintenance personnel, who has a considerable knowledge and skill in library work. While courses are underway at the college level for the library technician in Ontario, many library technicians have gained their competence through experience and informal training including short courses, conferences, and workshops. A library technician may be involved in any one of many aspects of library service including the ordering of books and materials, cataloguing, circulation, information retrieval, audio-visual service, work with children, library publicity, and publications. The library technician may directly assist the professional librarian, or he may be a part of a large team involved in one of the technical procedures of the library.



Because the public library serves children, a relationship with the school has always been established. In the past it has in some cases been an unfortunate relationship particularly where school libraries were not well developed. Some public libraries organized a substitute for school library service, and sent collections of books to the schools or established bookmobile service to the schools. The public library should complement the school library, and should provide the broader collection of materials that the school library cannot provide.

School libraries may extend their hours, but quite often a school library is not used sufficiently in the evening and on holidays to justify the cost of being open at those times. For this and other reasons children will want to use the public library and are encouraged to do so. The public library board and the school board, the public librarians and the school librarians and teachers, should establish a definition of their service and the co-ordination of their service for maximum efficiency in the interests of all.

Public librarians have worked well with the librarians in universities and colleges, and where new universities have been established the public library has often had the largest collection and has been of service to the students and faculty members of the universities for a period of time. This has been also true of colleges. The larger university library has been of great assistance as a backstop and source of material that the larger public libraries do not have and cannot otherwise obtain.

The National Library and the National Science Library in Ottawa also provide material for public libraries through inter-library loan, and through the union catalogue of the National Library, and the Telex network which links the National Library and many regional resource libraries in Ontario. The legislative libraries and the libraries of government departments and private institutions have also loaned books although their primary responsibility must be to their own members.





Library Associations have contributed to the development of public library service in Ontario. They are important as a means for communication among their own memberships and for their ability to promote new concepts and improvements in the organization of public library service. The library associations are concerned not simply with public libraries but with all libraries, although in most cases there is provision for meetings concerned only with public library service. Because library associations do bring all librarians and library trustees together with people in publishing and other important fields associated with library service, the danger of a public library developing in isolation is avoided.

The following are the major library associations in Ontario:

### *Ontario Library Association*

Formed in 1900, the OLA is the oldest library association in Canada. It has been important in all aspects of library service.

### *Ontario Library Trustees Association*

A division of the OLA, this is the association which represents and speaks for library trustees in Ontario.

### *Institute of Professional Librarians of Ontario*

The IPLO is an association of librarians in Ontario, formed in 1958 as a section of the Ontario Library Association, and in 1963 as a separate professional body, through the passing, by the Legislature of Ontario, of Bill Pr 40.

### *Canadian Library Association*

Formed in 1946, this is the library association for Canada, and has been important in the development of the National Library, public library standards, etc. The Canadian Library Association has its headquarters in Ottawa.

### *Canadian Library Trustees Association*

A division of CLA, this is the association which speaks for and represents public library trustees in Canada.

Public libraries are not responsible to the Department of Education in an administrative sense. The Minister of Education is responsible for public library legislation and regulations, and the Minister and the Department have responsibility for a provincial policy in support of public library development. But public library legislation delegates most responsibilities to the library boards. Within the Department of Education, the Provincial Library Service is the branch with the main responsibilities for library development. Other aspects of provincial service, outside the Provincial Library Service, are school library development, public records and archives, and the legislative library.

The Provincial Library Service has responsibilities in assisting in the development of public library service, the establishment of new public libraries, the publication of the *Ontario Library Review*, publishing annual statistics of public library service, and offering courses and workshops. The Public Libraries Act requires that the Director of Provincial Library Service act as the Secretary of the Ontario Provincial Library Council.

The Minister of Education publishes an annual report in which information pertaining to all aspects of education and the Department's work is presented. It is sent to the larger public libraries.

The Provincial Library Service Branch operates a library for the Department and for inspectors and teachers.

Although public libraries serve children the main responsibility of the public library is in the field of further education. The public library is the only institution within which a large collection of books and other material is made freely available to people including those who are not taking formal courses at an institution of higher learning.

However, many books and periodicals are now available at low cost. The public library cannot possibly supply everyone with all reading materials required, and for this reason it must carefully define its responsibilities and obtain and retain only those books and other materials that it should provide. The regional and provincial library system should endeavour to provide a service so that the resident of the smallest community or the most northern outpost can obtain the books, materials, and information that he needs and that can best be provided by the library.

Television and the paperback book do not eliminate the need for the public library, but they do require a change in policy and service. Adjusting to new conditions and new demands is a continuing challenge. The changes will affect library buildings, library organization, library technology, the course content of library schools, provincial library policies and the selection and retention of books and other materials.

There is little doubt that educational opportunities, information services, and cultural values all affect the economy, the community, the citizen. The public library in Ontario has had an honourable role in society for more than a century. The challenge of a rapidly changing world is one that the public library is facing with success.

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